

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic quotation system that makes a quote of
a product specified by a client, said electronic quotation system
5 comprising:

a product information storage module that stores product
information of the specified product, which is updated
appropriately;

a product quote preparation module that prepares a product
10 quote, based on the product information of the specified product,
in response to receipt of a quotation request of the specified
product;

a valid period setting module that sets a valid period of
the product quote; and

15 a product quote transmission module that sends a window,
which includes the product quote and an order option selection
element selected by the client to order a specification of the
product quote, to a sender of the quotation request in such a
manner that the order option selection element is enabled as
20 selectable when the product quote is in the valid period and the
order option selection element is disabled as unselectable when
the valid period of the product quote has expired.

2. An electronic quotation system that makes a quote of a product specified by a client, said electronic quotation system comprising:

a product information storage module that stores product
5 information of the specified product, which is updated appropriately;

a product quote preparation module that prepares a product quote, based on the product information of the specified product, in response to receipt of a quotation request of the specified
10 product;

a valid period setting module that sets a valid period of the product quote;

a product quote transmission module that sends a window, which includes the product quote, an order option selection
15 element selected by the client to order a specification of the product quote, and an update option selection element selected by the client to update the specification of the product quote after expiration of the valid period, to a sender of the quotation request in such a manner that the order option selection element
20 is enabled as selectable when the product quote is in the valid period and the order option selection element is disabled as unselectable when the valid period of the product quote has expired;

an update quote preparation module that, in response to receipt of an update request of the product quote by selection of the update option selection element in the window after expiration of the valid period, prepares an update quote based
5 on the product information of the specified product; and

an update quote transmission module that sends an updated window including the update quote, in place of the product quote, to the sender of the quotation request.

10 3. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 2, said electronic quotation system further comprising:

a delivery date specification module that specifies a delivery date of the specified product, based on the product information of the specified product,

15 wherein said product quote preparation module prepares the product quote including the delivery date of the specified product, which is specified by said delivery date specification module, in response to receipt of the quotation request of the specified product, and

20 said update quote preparation module prepares the update quote including an updated delivery date of the specified product, which is updated by said delivery date specification module, in response to receipt of the update request of the product quote.

4. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 2, said electronic quotation system further comprising:

a stock check module that reads a current status of a stock with respect to the specified product from said product information storage module to check the stock; and

a substitute product retrieval module that retrieves one or multiple substitute products, which are substitutable for the specified product, from said product information storage module,

wherein said update quote preparation module, when said stock check module determines that there is no stock of the specified product in response to the update request of the product quote, creates a list of the one or multiple substitute products, which are retrieved by said substitute product retrieval module as the substitutable for the specified product, instead of preparing the update quote, and

said update quote transmission module sends the window that includes the list of the one or multiple substitute products, instead of the product quote, to the sender of the quotation request.

5. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 4, wherein the quotation request of the specified product

includes specification of at least one component of the specified product,

said stock check module reads a current status of a stock with respect to the at least one specified component of the specified product from said product information storage module
5 to check the stock,

said substitute product retrieval module retrieves one or multiple substitute components, which are substitutable for the at least one specified component of the specified product, from
10 said product information storage module,

when said stock check module determines that there is no stock of the at least one specified component of the specified product in response to the update request of the product quote, said update quote preparation module creates a list of the one
15 or multiple substitute components, which are retrieved by said substitute product retrieval module as the substitutable for the at least one specified component of the specified product, instead of preparing the update quote, and

said update quote transmission module sends the window that
20 includes the list of the one or multiple substitute components, instead of the at least one specified component of the specified product, to the sender of the quotation request.

6. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 2, said electronic quotation system further comprising:

a stock check module that reads a current status of a stock with respect to the specified product from said product information storage module to check the stock; and

a substitute product retrieval module that retrieves one or multiple substitute products, which are substitutable for the specified product, from said product information storage module,

wherein said update quote preparation module, when said stock check module determines that there is no stock of the specified product in response to the update request of the product quote, prepares a substitute product quote, based on product information on the one or multiple substitute products, which are retrieved by said substitute product retrieval module as the substitutable for the specified product, instead of preparing the update quote, and

said update quote transmission module sends the window that includes the substitute product quote, instead of the product quote, to the sender of the quotation request.

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7. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 6, wherein the quotation request of the specified product includes specification of at least one component of the specified

product,

said stock check module reads a current status of a stock with respect to the at least one specified component of the specified product from said product information storage module
5 to check the stock,

said substitute product retrieval module retrieves one or multiple substitute components, which are substitutable for the at least one specified component of the specified product, from said product information storage module, and

10 said update quote preparation module, when said stock check module determines that there is no stock of the at least one specified component of the specified product in response to the update request of the product quote, prepares a substitute product quote, based on product information on the one or multiple
15 substitute components, which are retrieved by said substitute product retrieval module as the substitutable for the at least one specified component of the specified product, instead of preparing the update quote.

20 8. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim 1, wherein the quotation request of the specified product includes specification of at least one component of the specified product.

9. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim
1, wherein said product quote transmission module sends a
specific program, in addition to the window, to the sender of
5 the quotation request, said specific program causing a computer
at the sender of the quotation request to execute a function of
enabling the order option selection element as selectable when
the product quote is still in the valid period and disabling the
order option selection element as unselectable when the valid
10 period of the product quote has expired.

10. An electronic quotation system in accordance with claim
1, said electronic quotation system further comprising:

a valid period judgment module that performs judgment of
15 the valid period of the product quote at regular intervals or
at irregular intervals, after transmission of the product quote
by said product quote transmission module,

wherein said product quote transmission module sends the
window including an enabled state of the order option selection
20 element to the sender of the quotation request when a result of
the judgment by said valid period judgment module shows that the
product quote is still in the valid period, while sending the
window including a disabled state of the order option selection

element to the sender of the quotation request when a result of the judgment by said valid period judgment module shows that the valid period of the product quote has already expired.

5 11. An electronic quotation method that causes a computer to make a quote of a product specified by a client by utilizing a product information storage module that stores product information of the specified product, which is updated appropriately, said electronic quotation method comprising the
10 steps of:

(a) causing the computer to prepare a product quote, based on the product information of the specified product, in response to receipt of a quotation request of the specified product;

(b) causing the computer to set a valid period of the product
15 quote; and

(c) causing the computer to send a window, which includes the product quote and an order option selection element selected by the client to order a specification of the product quote, to a sender of the quotation request in such a manner that the order
20 option selection element is enabled as selectable when the product quote is in the valid period and the order option selection element is disabled as unselectable when the valid period of the product quote has expired.

12. An electronic quotation method that causes a computer to make a quote of a product specified by a client by utilizing a product information storage module that stores product information of the specified product, which is updated appropriately, said electronic quotation method comprising the steps of:

(a) causing the computer to prepare a product quote, based on the product information of the specified product, in response to receipt of a quotation request of the specified product;

(b) causing the computer to set a valid period of the product quote;

(c) causing the computer to send a window, which includes the product quote, an order option selection element selected by the client to order a specification of the product quote, and an update option selection element selected by the client to update the specification of the product quote after expiration of the valid period, to a sender of the quotation request in such a manner that the order option selection element is enabled as selectable when the product quote is in the valid period and the order option selection element is disabled as unselectable when the valid period of the product quote has expired;

(d) causing the computer, in response to receipt of an

update request of the product quote by selection of the update option selection element in the window after expiration of the valid period, to prepare an update quote based on the product information of the specified product; and

5 (e) causing the computer to send an updated window including the update quote, in place of the product quote, to the sender of the quotation request.

13. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim
10 12, wherein step(d) causes the computer, in response to receipt of an update request of the product quote by selection of the update option selection element in the window after expiration of the valid period, to prepare an update quote including a delivery date based on the product information of the specified
15 product.

14. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim
12, wherein said step(d), in response to receipt of an update request of the product quote, reads a current status of a stock
20 with respect to the specified product from said product information storage module, retrieves one or multiple substitute products, which are substitutable for the specified product, from said product information storage module when it is determined

that there is no stock of the specified product, and creates a list of the one or multiple substitute products, instead of preparing the update quote, and

said step(e) sends the window including the list of the
5 one or multiple substitute products, instead of the product quote,
to the sender of the quotation request.

15. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim
14, wherein the quotation request of the specified product
10 includes specification of at least one component of the specified
product,

said step(d), in response to receipt of an update request
of the product quote, reads a current status of a stock with
respect to the at least one specified component of the specified
15 product from said product information storage module, retrieves
one or multiple substitute components, which are substitutable
for the at least one specified component of the specified product,
from said product information storage module when it is
determined that there is no stock of the at least one specified
20 component of the specified product, and creates a list of the
one or multiple substitute components, instead of preparing the
update quote, and

said step(e) sends the window including the list of the

one or multiple substitute components, instead of the at least one specified component of the specified product, to the sender of the quotation request.

5 16. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim 12, wherein said step(d), in response to receipt of an update request of the product quote, reads a current status of a stock with respect to the specified product from said product information storage module, retrieves one or multiple substitute
10 products, which are substitutable for the specified product, from said product information storage module when it is determined that there is no stock of the specified product, and creates a substitute product quote, based on product information of the one or multiple substitute products instead of creating the
15 update quote, and

 said step(e) sends the window including the substitute product quote, instead of the product quote, to the sender of the quotation request.

20 17. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the quotation request of the specified product includes specification of at least one component of the specified product,

said step(d), in response to receipt of an update request of the product quote, reads a current status of a stock with respect to the at least one specified component of the specified product from said product information storage module, retrieves
5 one or multiple substitute components, which are substitutable for the at least one specified component of the specified product, from said product information storage module when it is determined that there is no stock of the at least one specified component of the specified product, and creates a substitute
10 product quote, based on product information on the one or multiple substitute components, instead of creating the update quote.

18. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim 11, wherein the quotation request of the specified product
15 includes specification of at least one component of the specified product.

19. An electronic quotation method in accordance with claim 11, wherein said step(c) sends a specific program, in addition
20 to the window, to the sender of the quotation request, said specific program causing a computer at the sender of the quotation request to execute a function of enabling the order option selection element as selectable when the product quote is still

in the valid period and disabling the order option selection element as unselectable when the valid period of the product quote has expired.

5 20. A program that causes a computer to make a quote of a product specified by a client by utilizing a product information storage module that stores product information of the specified product, which is updated appropriately, said program causing the computer to attain the functions of:

10 (a) preparing a product quote, based on the product information of the specified product, in response to receipt of a quotation request of the specified product;

 (b) setting a valid period of the product quote; and

 (c) sending a window, which includes the product quote and
15 an order option selection element selected by the client to order a specification of the product quote, to a sender of the quotation request in such a manner that the order option selection element is enabled as selectable when the product quote is in the valid period and the order option selection element is disabled as
20 unselectable when the valid period of the product quote has expired.